

Easter Once a Pagan Festival

Easter Blossoms.
In the awful dawn of Being, when
His world lay grim,
God looked forth upon His angels,
splendid around Him;
Said He then unto the whitest, rap-
turous to see;
"Go you down and make yon planet
beautiful for me."

Humbly passed the gentle vision all
the black world o'er,
And where'er His angel journeyed it
was black no more,
For the flowers sprang in glory
where the fair feet trod,
Of white Innocence, the angel dear-
est to our God.

The term Easter is undoubtedly derived from the old Saxon word, Ostara, Osterr or Eostre. This Eostre was a heathen goddess who personified the spring. April was her month, and was known as Eostre-monath just as it is still called in Germany Ostermonat.

At their Eostre feasts our Saxon forefathers celebrated the passing of winter and the birth of another year; and they did it in sturdy, boisterous way, with quaint, rough games and pastimes, and with much eating and drinking. When the early Christians came to the Saxon land they found this rude festival celebrated contemporaneously with their Easter. As was their way on going into pagan countries, they adopted what they could of the indigenous customs, shaping them with their own, until their own absorbed them. And the absorption of Eostre was a very easy process, especially since the Christians kept the old name and many of the old ways. It was a simple matter to change a festival celebrating the return to life of the world, to one celebrating the return to life of the Saviour of the world.

This explains the origin of many of the queer Easter customs. The egg, for instance. Away back among the ancient Egyptians the egg was regarded as the symbol of re-creation. The old Persian tradition, too, has it that the world itself was hatched from an egg in the spring of a year long ago. The Saxons believed that their goddess Eostre was sprung from a huge egg which descended from heaven and rested far off in the East, somewhere on the banks of the Euphrates. The Christians kept the egg custom, merely adapting the symbol.

On Easter Day the wind should blow from the east. If it does a wise plan is to draw water and wash in it. By this precaution one avoids any ill effects the year through from our treacherous east winds. In parts of Germany linen cloths are spread out on the grass on Saturday evening, and on Sunday morning early whatever has fallen into them, whether dew, rain or snow, is used for the washing. But the Easter water is effective only if drawn while the wind is east.

The connection of rabbits with Easter has puzzled a good many people. It is really not the rabbit at all, but the hare. The hare is not common in this country, however, and confectioners are not overparticular about nice points in natural history.

This is a German custom. The white Easter hare is almost as well known among German "kinder" as St. Nicholas himself. They believe that if they are good and obey their parents, then on Easter Eve the hare will come. It will enter the house after every one is asleep, and hide in out-of-the-way corners any number of most wonderfully colored eggs. Sure enough, on Easter morning, when Hans and Gretel wake up there are the eggs, in the expected corners, while the parents look on and smile.

From remote times the hare has been a symbol for the moon, and as the date of Easter depends on the moon the connection is natural. There are several reasons for connecting the hare with the moon. The hare feeds at night. Young hares are born with their eyes open (rabbits are born blind), therefore they are fabled never to close them and are identified with the "open-eyed watchers of the skies at night." In old times the eyes and brains of a hare were a sure cure for sleepiness. The Egyptian word for hare also meant open, so the hare became associated with the opening of the new season, and therefore with the Easter egg.

In England there are many queer customs to-day that date from the hare belief. One of the queerest is the Hallaton hare scramble and bottle kicking. Many years ago, so long that no one knows when it was, a piece of land was bequeathed to the parish on condition that every Easter Monday the rector should provide "two hare pies, a quantity of ale, and two dozen penny loaves" to be scrambled for on Hare Pie Bank, just outside the village. Lately a rector tried to have this condition removed, but it could not be done. The public outcry was too great. He found chalked all over his house, and even over his church: "No pie, no parson, and a job for the glazier!" And the good people of Hallaton are probably girding up their loins now against Monday's scramble.

The Need of an Easter Greeting.
In Roman Catholic countries the mediaeval "Christ is risen." "He is risen indeed," still prevails, but not in America, and it is still doubtful if such a greeting, however significant in spirit, would find thorough acceptance here. With the growing recognition of the festival, its celebration by all sects and classes, and is now the case, the want of a verbal expression symbolizing in some part all that Easter day means is strongly felt. There should be an Easter greeting just as there is a Christmas and New Year's greeting, and it should be welcome to all creeds. The opportunity is lying in wait for some felicitous phrasemaker.—New York Sun

UP-TO-DATE RECIPES
Sham Omelet—Break five salted crackers into two good cups of milk; soak well, then cook and, when boiling, stir in two beaten eggs, stirring until well folded into milk. Then let stand, cooking just a little, and fold over again. Thus perhaps two or three times. (Don't forget salt and pepper to taste.) Serve on buttered toast.
Rutabagas With Lamb—Rutabagas are plentiful now and sell at one cent a pound; they weigh from one to six pounds each. Take two pounds of lamb, wash and put to boil with water to cover. After a few minutes of boiling skim and add salt to taste. Now peel and cut the rutabagas into pieces half inch wide, one inch long, and put in with lamb; put over slow fire till both are well done. There should be only a little gravy left.
Herring Salad—Boil eight large potatoes, let cool, cut in dice. Cut up two onions fine, two hard-boiled eggs, four large or six small sour pickles, six sour apples in dice. Have six salted herring. Let herring lie in water over night, then pick bones out and cut fish in small pieces. Dressing: One teaspoon salt, one tablespoon sugar, one-half cup melted butter, one-half desertspoon pepper, vinegar to taste. Mix together and pour over all.
Apple Pudding—For a very tasty apple pudding take a deep dish, butter it generously and cover the bottom with a layer of peeled and sliced apples, sprinkle liberally with sugar and cinnamon and dot with bits of butter. Put in another layer of apples and seasoning and continue until dish is full. Cover with piecrust and bake until the apples are soft and the pastry is browned. Eaten hot with good cream it is delicious.

UP-TO-DATE RECIPES
Egg Patties—Beat eggs light and add crushed cracker crumbs till it forms a thick paste, then thin with a little milk. Season with finely cut onion, pepper and salt. Fry in butter, like pancakes. Very good and something different.
Russian Fish Pie—Cut fish from bones, cut into pieces half-inch square, add one chopped egg (hard-boiled), teaspoon parsley, one tablespoon white sauce, salt, pepper and lemon juice to taste. Mix two cups flour with one-half teaspoon salt, one teaspoon baking powder. Rub in one-half cup lard and add gradually cold water enough to make a stiff paste. Roll out in square of nine or ten inches. Place fish in center, fold each corner of pastry into center, so as to form an envelope. Brush top with beaten egg. Place in buttered pan. Bake forty minutes in moderate oven. A white sauce may be served if desired.
"Canadian Snow" Pudding—Thicken one pint boiling water with three tablespoons cornstarch, a little salt, one tablespoon sugar. Beat whites of two eggs stiff and stir in while hot; add two drops vanilla flavoring. Set away to get cold. Serve with sauce made with milk thickened with the yolks of two eggs, two tablespoons cornstarch, pinch of salt, plenty of sugar and two drops of pineapple flavoring.
Crispettes—Beat two eggs, add one cup brown sugar sifted with six teaspoons flour and one-eighth teaspoon salt. Beat. Add one cup chopped nuts. Drop by teaspoonfuls about three inches apart on greased paper. Bake in hot oven.
Burnt Sugar Cake—One cup granulated sugar; burn until very black, then add one-half cup cold water slowly. Cook until you have a thick syrup; enough for five or six cakes. Then take 1½ cups granulated sugar, sifted; half cup butter, yolks two eggs, one cup cold water, two cups flour. Beat thoroughly, add three or four teaspoons syrup or enough to make a light brown, one teaspoon vanilla, two-thirds cup flour, two teaspoons baking powder, and well-beaten whites of two eggs. Use any good icing.

BELGIAN KING'S SISTER AND NIECE REFUGEES IN ENGLAND DURING WAR



Princess Marie Louise (top) and Princess Henriette.

Refugees in England during the war are the Princess Henriette and her daughter Princess Marie Louise, sister and niece of King Albert of Belgium. Practically every titled Belgian except the king himself is now in England, as well as hundreds of thousands of the common people.

Household Hints

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Michael J. Leo Toledo

A QUAIN ITALIAN FETE

How Signa's Peasants Commemorate a Saintly Shepherdess.

Among the quaint and ancient ceremonies with which the Italian people keep their Easter celebrations, none is older or more picturesque than the one known as the festival of the Beata Giovanna, which is a small village situated among the vine clad hills that can be seen from Florence. Of Giovanna, the heroine of the festival, very little appears to be known, except that she was born somewhere in the thirteenth century and used to tend her father's sheep, which were pastured on the hillsides of Signa. Very early in life she gained a reputation for sanctity, and in course of time her fame spread far and wide. She was credited with the power of performing miracles and with having special control over wild animals and storms. In later life she retired to a cell built into a house in the village of Signa and remained there immured until she died and was buried in the village church.

Now, every Easter Monday, in commemoration of her virtues, all the parishes for miles around send gifts of oil and other things to the church of her native place. Deputations headed by the local clergy pour into Signa from early morning until late in the afternoon. The gifts they bring are borne by a donkey or a pony, on whose back, in addition, is a small child, who is supposed to be the prettiest village can produce. Her hair and neck are covered with necklaces and other articles of jewelry, with which the women have decorated her, and she is often clad in gold embroidered robes.

As each procession is sighted the officials of the church rally out to meet it, with banners flying and bands playing, and it is solemnly conducted into Signa. The donkey, with its burden, is led into the church and up to the altar, where prayers are said and the gifts removed. In the streets and open places of the village a fair is always held on these occasions, with the accompaniment of merry-go-rounds, steam organs and itinerant performances of the usual descriptions. At sunset a stillness falls upon the whole place, and the priest appears upon the small gallery over the church door, and there, holding up to view the hands and other relics of the Giovanna, pronounces the benediction upon the assembled people.

He Can't Get In-- Why?



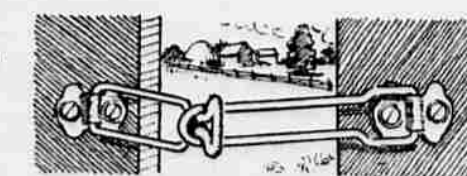
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